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COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Progress report

I. INTRODUCTION

1. According to Article 12.5 of the Convention, each Party not included in Annex I to the Convention "shall make its initial national communications within three years of the entry into force of the Convention for that Party, or of the availability of financial resources in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 3. Parties that are least developed countries may make their initial communication at their discretion".

2. At its second session, by its decision 10/CP.2 paragraph 1(a), the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat, in accordance with Article 8.2(c), "to facilitate assistance to Parties, particularly developing country Parties, in the preparation of their initial communications, through the organization of workshops at the regional level; to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences in the development of emission factors and activity data for the estimation of the inventory, as well as, on request, for other elements of information in the initial communication; and to provide a report to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, at each of their sessions" (FCCC/CP/1996/15/Add.1).

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3. At the same session, by its decision 3/CP.2, having considered the progress report of the secretariat on its activities relating to technical and financial support to Parties, namely CC:INFO, CC:TRAIN, CC:FORUM and CC:SUPPORT, the COP requested the secretariat to prepare a progress report for consideration by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its sixth session (FCCC/CP/1996/15/Add.1).

4. At its fifth session, the SBI took note of the activities undertaken by the secretariat to facilitate the provision of support to non-Annex I Parties for the preparation of their initial national communications described in document FCCC/SB/1997/INF.1, and requested the secretariat to continue to report to the SBI at future sessions on further progress achieved (FCCC/SBI/1997/6 para. 21).

5. The present document contains a progress report on the activities of the secretariat to facilitate provision of financial and technical support to non-Annex I Parties, in particular for the preparation of these Parties' initial national communications.

II. ACTIVITIES

A. Collection of information on national communications

6. At the fifth session of the SBI, the secretariat provided a table with information on the expected dates of publication of the initial communications of 47 non-Annex I Parties (FCCC/SB/1997/INF.1, annex II). The secretariat intends to continue informing Parties on this important aspect of the communication process, and make available any further information by the sixth session of the SBI.

7. In anticipation of the imminent submission of national communications by non-Annex I Parties, one of which was received by the secretariat on 7 March 1997, and in order to prepare for further discussion, the secretariat invited Parties to provide views on the process of consideration of these communications. The secretariat will prepare a compilation of these views and make it available to the SBI at its sixth session.

B. Regional workshops

8. The secretariat is continuing its participation in regional workshops on the implementation of the Convention where it presents a module on the guidelines for the preparation of the initial national communications of non-Annex I Parties and the financial and technical assistance that is available for the preparation of these communications. The secretariat is to participate in four to five such regional workshops during the first half of 1997.

C. CC:FORUM

9. The secretariat has continued to organize meetings of the informal consultative group (CC:FORUM). The aim is to coordinate the exchange of views on technical and financial support to developing countries and economies in transition for the implementation of the Convention and the preparation of the initial national communications.

10. At its 5th meeting, held on 19 December 1996 in Geneva, CC:FORUM made a number of recommendations, such as the use of regional workshops as a cost-effective means to stimulate and accelerate the process of preparation of the communications, the strengthening of existing information exchange mechanisms and systems based on the Internet, CD-ROMs and the World Wide Web (WWW), and the indication and/or nomination of national technical focal points for the preparation of the inventory. The meeting also recommended the compilation of comparative data tables with details by country on national focal points, greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory, national policies and plans as well as national communications (FCCC/SB/1997/INF.1).

11. The 6th meeting of CC:FORUM took place on 26 February 1997 in Bonn in conjunction with the fifth session of the SBI and the SBSTA, and was attended by representatives from Parties, bilateral and multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The meeting was convened to update experiences, consider implementation of the recommendations of the 5th meeting and discuss further steps to be taken.

12. The 6th meeting reaffirmed the need to improve access by non-Annex I Parties to climate change information exchange systems such as the Internet and the WWW. The meeting also recommended to continue work to provide these Parties with a forum for exchanging inventory, as well as vulnerability and adaptation data, and to organize regional workshops on the preparation of the communications.

13. A comparative table on the implementation of the Convention by Asian countries, prepared at the Sixth Asia-Pacific Seminar on Climate Change organized by the Government of Japan, was presented at the meeting. The meeting recommended that similar tables be prepared for the African and Latin American regions. It took note of the information provided by the Government of Japan on the seventh Asia-Pacific seminar on climate change, scheduled to be held in July 1997, which will focus on the preparation of national communications and also include a brief training seminar on the preparation of national inventories of GHGs and sinks.

14. Progress was also reported on the joint programme of the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the secretariat in order to provide, in a pro-active and systematic manner, non-Annex I Parties with technical and financial support needed to complete their initial communications in the light of the guidelines contained in decision 10/CP.2 (FCCC/CP/1996/15/Add.1).

15. As part of this programme, a number of regional training and information exchange workshops are being envisaged in the regions of Africa and Latin America. These workshops are intended to advance work by participating countries in the preparation of their initial national communications. Other features of this programme are the assembly of a roster of experts, a central point for collecting information on the progress of communication projects, a help-desk function, and the mobilization of rapid expert assistance.

D. Information exchange

16. The secretariat has been focusing on enhancing the information flow related to the preparation of initial communications by non-Annex I Parties. To this end, it carried out a number of activities, which included the development of new information products.

17. The February 1997 update to the CC:INFO Report was distributed to delegates attending the February/March meetings of the subsidiary bodies and more than 500 governmental and non-governmental recipients in developing countries as well as bilateral and multilateral organizations. The update provides current information by country on activities related to the implementation of the Convention.

18. The secretariat has expanded its use of electronic means of dissemination in order to increase its outreach and to reduce reliance on print media. Most of the information provided by the secretariat is now available in electronic form, via its site on the WWW. This site is currently being redesigned for further ease of use and expanded content, including the addition of text-only versions of the official documents to ensure easier transfer and the application of new protocols allowing easier searches. Official documents in additional United Nations languages might be available by the seventh session of the SBI.

19. For those without access to the Internet, the secretariat has produced the Web site of the Climate Change secretariat on CD-ROM. This CD-ROM provides the full contents of the web site of the secretariat, including all official documents of the negotiations as well as the necessary software. The first release of the CD-ROM was distributed during the second session of the COP. An updated version, which enables users to carry out a full text search of official documents, was made available to the delegates at the December 1996 and February/March 1997 meetings of the subsidiary bodies. The CD-ROM will be regularly updated and distributed.

20. Progress was also made with regard to CC:INFO/Web, a pilot initiative of the secretariat. This initiative has been undertaken to encourage Parties to develop national web sites on climate change and the implementation of the Convention and to foster the growth of a network of such sites for sharing information and ideas, including for the preparation of national communications. CC:INFO/Web was developed with the assistance of the Ministry of Science and Technology of Brazil and funding from the Ministry for Economic Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany. It has also taken account of comments, suggestions and observations from Parties which expressed interest in joining this initiative and contributed to its development, particularly, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Senegal, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

21. The secretariat has completed the CC:INFO/Web CD-ROM 1.0, which provides tools for developers of the Web, including a step-by-step tutorial kit and leading software. This CD-ROM was distributed to delegates attending the 5th meeting of the SBI and to more than 100 other relevant individuals and organizations.

E. Training

22. CC:TRAIN is a three-year UNDP project that supports the efforts of 17 developing countries in various regions to implement the Convention, particularly in preparing their initial national communications. CC:TRAIN is funded by the GEF and bilateral donors, and executed by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in collaboration with the Climate Change secretariat and the Information Unit on Conventions of UNEP.

23. Since the fifth session of the SBI, CC:TRAIN has helped to organize workshops on climate change and the UNFCCC in Chad (28-29 March), Benin (7-8 April), Peru (21-22 April), Paraguay (23-25 April), and Ecuador (13-14 May). Two training workshops on the preparation of national GHG inventories were also held in Chad (1-3 April) and Benin (9-11 April). Additional regional technical training workshops on inventory, mitigation, and vulnerability and adaptation will take place in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific region between May and October 1997. Seventeen national workshops on preparing a national strategy to implement the Convention will also be held in the course of 1997.

24. Contracted by the secretariat, UNITAR/CC:TRAIN is completing the development of a presentation and information package designed to inform national decision and policy-makers on the guidelines for the national communications of non-Annex I Parties. This will be available in English, French and Spanish.

25. In the next three months, training packages will be published by CC:TRAIN regional partner institutions in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Pacific on (a) preparing a GHG inventory based on IPCC guidelines; (b) preparing a mitigation analysis based on IPCC guidelines; (c) preparing a vulnerability and adaptation assessment based on IPCC guidelines; and (d) preparing a national strategy to implement the UNFCCC. These packages will be ready between August and November 1997. The CC:TRAIN regional partner institutions are also available to assist related projects and programmes in the region.

III. ACTION BY THE SBI

26. The SBI may wish to take note of the activities of the secretariat to facilitate the provision of financial and technical support contained in this progress report, and provide guidance to the secretariat.

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